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THE ICELANDIC STORY OF CINDERELLA,

By William Howard Carpenter.

THE story of Cinderella and her slipper, common to all Germanic nations, exists in Iceland* in two versions, both of which have, however, the same general character, and are either both derived from one common original, or one is but the later amplification of the other. The first supposition is probably the true one, as, while both have many points in common, each has characteristics peculiar to it alone; the version printed first has, however, every appearance of being the elder. When the story went to Iceland it is, of course, utterly impossible to determine, but in its present form it bears unmistakably the stamp of the Middle Ages, with distinctive Icelandic features; witness, for instance, in the first story the "bride's-bench," and in both the fetching of the bride home to the bridegroom's house, where the wedding-feast was held, usages which are often described in the Sagas, but which, with other ancient customs, have long since disappeared. The following translations have been made as nearly literal as possible, in the hope of thereby preserving some, at least, of the freshness and naiveté of the Icelandic originals. The first story is called, in Mr. Arnason's collection, the

I. Step-Mother Story.

Once upon a time there lived a king and queen in their kingdom. They had an only daughter named Mjadveig, who early grew to grace and beauty. She was brought up by her parents until she was fully

* The Folk-Tales of Iceland, collected by Mr. Jón Arnason, of Reykjavik, were published in two large octavo volumes in the original Icelandic. Leipzig, 1862-64.

grown; then the queen took sick and died. The king mourned much for her and would not be comforted, and the same may be said of his daughter Mjadveig. The father and daughter went often to the tomb of the queen and sat there whole hours at a time; that seemed to bring them the greatest comfort. When this, however, had gone on for a long time people saw that it should not so continue, because the government was all out of order and was as good as none at all. The king's attention was called to this, and he was advised to seek a new wife; at first, for a long time, he did not think well of the plan, but it so came about at last that he allowed himself to be persuaded. He then went on a journey through his kingdom and resolved to take as a queen whichever woman pleased him best, without regard to nobleness of birth or riches. After he had journeyed long and far he came finally to a great crowd of people. There he saw a woman very sorrowful and her daughter with her. The king asked her why she was so unhappy, but she prayed him not to increase her sorrow by asking her the cause of it. The king, however, at this persisted the more. The woman then said that since he had so set his mind upon it she would tell him. She said the cause of her grief was, that she had not very long ago lost her husband. The king then said that it was the same with him as with her, and therefore felt compassion for the widow and liked her well. He then asked her if she would not take him in marriage if the match were proposed to her. There is not much more to tell about it; they agreed that the woman should go home with the king to the palace and become his queen. The daughter of the queen, who was named Kroka, was allowed to live with Mjadveig in her bower.

After the mother and daughter had been there for a while people began to observe that when they thought nobody near them they both changed into giantesses, and that caused the king much grief, although he could not remedy it. Mjadveig, however, fared the worst of all, because Kroka took everything away from her that she wished, and beside that she was not free from fear about herself. Once upon a time a vision appeared to Mjadveig in a dream; she thought her mother came to her and told her to take and keep that which lay upon the path, but which she had never noticed, although she had been

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there over and over again; this, she said, she should wear upon her bosom, and then she would not be harmed. Mjadveig went now to the path and looked about and found a kerchief, and wore it just as had been told her. Kroka, however, discovered this and tore the kerchief away from Mjadveig. Shortly after Mjadveig dreamed again that her mother bade her to take that which lay near the path. When Mjadveig came to the path she looked about and found there a clew of yarn, and took hold of the loose end that lay outside; the clew now ran on before her until she came to a bower. She knew that there was intended to be her dwelling place; everything there was well arranged and everything in plenty; she could see from the bower everything that was done about the palace, but nobody saw either her or her bower. On the way to the bower Mjadveig lost one of her shoes, and she therefore made a vow, that whatever man found the shoe she would marry. After she had been a short time in the bower a very beautiful ship came to the land; on board was a fair and handsome king's son, who went ashore and up to the palace. The king was so beside himself on account of all that he had undergone, that he scarcely showed himself to his guests, neither did he go to meet them, and therefore did not invite the king's son to him. On the way, however, to the palace the king's son found Mjadveig's shoe. The queen took the king's son by both hands, and they talked much together. Among other things he asked the queen if she knew whether any costly thing had been lost from the king's treasury not very long ago. She replied, yes, and said that her daughter had complained to her during the day that she had lost something, but had not been willing to tell her what it was. She bade the king's son to tell her what he had found; he granted her request and showed her the shoe. The queen pretended to recognise it as her daughter's shoe, and said she would take it to her. The king's son granted her leave to do so, but asked her to allow him to see her daughter with the shoe upon her foot. The queen then went out, but came back again shortly with her daughter, and she had the shoe on. The king's son then proposed for the maiden, and she was promised him. He decided to go with her home to his kingdom and to hold the wedding feast there. The queen bade her daughter to let her know when the wedding feast

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should take place, because, she said, she wished to be present. When this had been decided the king's son set out and sailed away from the land with his betrothed. When, however, he had gone but a short distance, two birds came flying, alighted in the rigging, and said,

"At the prow sits Hewn-heel,
Full is her shoe with blood;
At home sits Mjadveig
In her golden bower.
Turn back king's son."

When the king's son heard this, he caused the foot of his betrothed to be examined, and it was discovered that the shoe had been too small, and, therefore, her toes and heel had been cut off so that she could get the shoe on; it was also now to be seen that she had unmated shoes upon her feet. The king's son then ordered his men to put back to land again, and this was done. He went on land with but few attendants, and it was now as if he were shown the way to Mjadveig's bower. He talked with her, and liked this maiden better than the other. He saw that she had the mate to the shoe found upon her foot; he then fetched the shoe that had been found, and bade her to put it on, and it fitted her. Mjadveig then told him how everything stood, that the mother and daughter were giantesses, and about the distress of her father. They finally agreed that she should go with him. They now went to the ship, and the king's son stood off from land, and was most rejoiced over his new betrothed, but did not let it appear otherwise than that he intended to marry Kroka. When he had been a short time back in his kingdom he caused a ship to be sent to seek the queen, the step-mother of Mjadveig; when the ship, however, had gone, he caused Kroka to be put to death, and her body afterwards to be burned. The ashes were gathered up and made into porridge that should be given to the queen when she came. The queen came and the porridge was placed before her, but when she had tasted it, she said, "The porridge is good at my daughter's, but I am thirsty after eating it." When she had said this a voice came out of her throat that said, "Eat me not, mother." The queen was then about to change into a giantess, but at that instant she was fallen upon and killed, and was then burned. After this, Mjadveig and the

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king's son sat upon the bride's bench,* and their wedding feast was drunk with much ceremony and state, and Mjadveig's father was also there. Mjadveig lived afterward long and happily, had lads and lasses, dug roots and grasses,† and now the story is ended.

II. The Story of Mjadveig, the Daughter of Mani.

It is said that in old times a king called Mani ruled over his kingdom, and that he and his queen had a daughter, named Mjadveig, who was early adorned with all womanly graces. The king caused a splendid bower to be built for her, and allowed her to have plenty of serving-maids. The sad mishap, however, befell that the queen, Mjadveig's mother, took sick, and died. After her death the king grieved so much that he became well nigh sick, and indifferent to everything. At this his councillors thought that matters should go differently, and advised him to take a wife in a becoming manner. The king accepted this advice, and sent two of his highest councillors with a large retinue on a wooing journey, and they accordingly set sail. They, however, lost their course, and knew not whither they sailed or what they should do; at last they saw land, and directed their course thither. They knew not the land, but, nevertheless, went ashore. Before them lay a desert; they went into it to search for human habitations, but found none; finally, they heard harp music so beautiful that they thought they never before had heard anything so fine, and went toward the sound until they saw a little silken tent, and thither they hastened their steps. They then saw that within the tent a woman sat upon a chair; she played the beautiful harp music that had shown them the way thither, and a little girl was with her. When she saw the crowd of people she became so frightened that she dropped the harp and fell beside it in a swoon. When she came to herself again she asked upon what sort of a journey they were, and why they had come thither. They replied that they had lost their course, that

* In old Icelandic wedding feasts the bride and bridesmaids were seated on the "bride's-bench," the bride in the middle; the bride's-bench was the seat of honour, and the central part of the dais at the upper end of the hall.

† A standing peroration of Icelandic tales.

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they were sent abroad by King Mani because his queen was dead and he suffered greatly on account of the loss; therefore the councillors wished she would tell them who and what she was, because, they said, they had taken a fancy to her. The woman did as they requested, and said that she had been the queen of a powerful king there in the land, but an overwhelming host had laid waste the country and killed the king, and it had been the intention of the leader to conquer the kingdom and to possess it; that, however, she said, she would not suffer, and therefore had fled with her daughter thither into the wilderness, and expected in that manner to escape. The councillors thought all this favourable, because they considered such a chance fortunate for King Mani, and now proposed a marriage with Mani to the woman. She received this offer indifferently, and said that she had not thought of marriage, but, nevertheless, yielded to their request. They now went aboard the ship and she with them, and they had a most favourable wind back to the realm of King Mani. As soon as the ship was seen, the king caused himself to be driven in a carriage to the strand, and when he saw his betrothed all sorrow left him. Afterward he went home to the palace and caused a great wedding feast to be made which lasted a fortnight. When this was ended the king went on an expedition to collect tribute of his realm.

Now the story turns to Mjadveig, the king's daughter, as she sat in her bower. Her step-mother came to her and said that she was lonely at home with her few attendants, that she was going outside the palace to amuse herself, and asked Mjadveig to go with her, and she did so; the queen allowed the girl whom she called her daughter to go with her. The three now went out together, and the queen was very friendly toward her step-daughter. When however they had gone a long way from the palace, the queen asked Mjadveig to allow her daughter to change garments with her; so Mjadveig allowed the girl to wear her dress while she herself wore the girl's dress. Then said the queen, "Now I command and lay the spell* that my daughter shall receive every look and appearance of Mjadveig so that nobody shall know one from the other." Then the mother and

* The formula with which witches always say the spell in Icelandic tales.

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daughter bound Mjadveig hand and foot and left her so; but they went back home to the palace and the queen set her daughter in Mjadveig's castle, and all thought it was she herself; the chamber-maids, however, thought she had somewhat changed her temper since her pleasure-walk with the queen; but they suspected nothing, and neither knew nor cared about the strange girl who came thither with the queen. About Mjadveig the king's daughter it remains to be told that she now lay helpless, as has been said, and slept from grief and despair. Then she dreamed that her dead mother came to her, spoke words of compassion, loosed her bonds and gave her a napkin upon which it seemed to her was food, but told her she must never eat all of it, and to beware of allowing anybody to see it, and to be on her guard against her step-mother and her daughter. Then Mjadveig awoke, and all was as she had dreamed. About the queen it is to be said that she suspected that Mjadveig still lived, she therefore sent her daughter secretly to find out about her. She found Mjadveig, and saw that a change had taken place in her condition. She then went craftily to work in order to ascertain how this change had come about, and told Mjadveig that her mother had done wrongly to deceive her in this manner, and said that now she would remain with Mjadveig in exile, and that they would have justice done them when the king came home again, and that now it should fare the same with both of them. Mjadveig, however, little liked this speech of the girl, but was obliged to let be as she had said. After a little while the girl lay down and seemed to fall asleep. As soon as Mjadveig thought she slept she went a little aside, took the napkin and began to eat; but now the queen's daughter had gained her desire, she sprang up, tore the napkin away from Mjadveig, and turned about toward home; she said that this food should never be of use to Mjadveig. Mjadveig was now little better off than before, and wandered about here and there until she fell asleep from weariness and exhaustion. Then she dreamed that her mother came to her as before and told her she had acted incautiously, but now that it had so happened she must go directly to the sea; there she would find a point of land running out into the water, to go out upon it, and she would find there a little house, locked, but with the key in the door. Then she should go around the house

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three times with the course of the sun and three times against the course of the sun, and turn the key each time, then the door could be opened. There she would have companionship, and there she would not find the time long, and finally she said to her:

"There cuckoos sing,
There fountains spring,
And there gambol the rams in glee."

Then Mjadveig awoke and did as it had been shown her in her dream; everything happened just as it had been told her, and each day there seemed to her more pleasant than the last. It, however, so happened, once upon a time, as she went up to the mainland to amuse herself, that she saw a fleet of ships sailing near the land and they were standing in toward the harbour. At this sight she became very much frightened, and ran so hastily back to her hut that one of her shoes became loose and she lost it on the way; this shoe was made of gold. Over the fleet commanded a certain king's son, who sailed to this land in order to ask for the hand of Mjadveig the daughter of Mani. As he went, however, from his ship to the palace he found a woman's shoe of gold, so delicately formed that he vowed to marry the girl to whom the shoe belonged. He now went to the palace and asked for the hand of Mjadveig the daughter of Mani, but said that he had nevertheless made the vow to marry nobody but the one who owned the shoe he had found as he came to the palace. The queen asked him to allow her to see the shoe and the king's son fetched it. She said she recognized it quite, and that Mjadveig, her daughter, had lost it once upon a time as she was taking a pleasure-walk, and that long before she was grown up. After that she went to her daughter and told her how matters stood, and accompanied her into a side apartment in order that she might put on the golden shoe, but she could not get half her foot into it. Then the queen cut off both toes and heel and so put on the shoe. The girl thought her mother rather hard, but the queen said that much might be gained by marrying the king's son. She dressed her then in the most showy finery and led her into the hall and showed the king's son that the shoe fitted, and so it seemed to him to do. The king's son then made his proposal anew to Mjadveig the daughter of Mani, and the offer was favourably received.

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The king's son said he would like to sail with her home to his kingdom and then come again later and invite the guests to the banquet, and so it was arranged. When, however, he sailed by the house where Mjadveig the king's daughter was, he heard such a great twittering of birds that he began to pay attention to it, because he understood the bird language, and he heard them say :—

"At the prow sits Hewn-heel,
Full is her shoe with blood;
Here in the land is Mjadveig
Mani's daughter,
A much better
Bride were she.
Turn back king's son."

At first he would not believe this bird-chatter; then he began to look about him, and he saw that everything was as they said as far as the girl was concerned. Then he took a rune-stick * and laid it upon her shoulders, and she became a great and hideous giantess, and she was made to tell everything about herself and her mother the queen. At the close of her story he killed her and salted her down, and her flesh filled twelve barrels, and the king's son had it all placed in a single ship in which there was nothing except a quantity of powder. Afterward he launched a boat, rowed to land, and found the house. With the help of information from the birds he was able to open the door; there he saw a maiden exceedingly beautiful, and asked her name. She said she was named Mjadveig and was the daughter of King Mani, and that she was there in concealment on account of her bad stepmother. The king's son told her how matters stood, showed her the golden shoe and put it on for her and saw that she had the mate to it. The king's son now considered this maiden betrothed to him, although the truth had been concealed from him, and with her consent he took her aboard ship with him and then sailed the ship skilfully into a hidden bay and remained there awhile. Afterward he sailed the whole fleet into the harbour of the town, went then to the king's hall and bade him together with the queen to the wedding-feast,

* Literally, *measuring-stick*. The distances on the old Icelandic measuring-sticks were, however, marked off with runes, which doubtless gave the magic power here imputed to them.

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and the king was willing to go, but the queen was not; she said she was not used to sailing and would rather stay at home than go on such a long journey. The king's son said that her daughter would be better pleased if she did not refuse the invitation, and talked about it to the queen until she finally yielded. They were accordingly all driven in a carriage to the strand; then they went aboard ship and put out to sea. On the voyage, however, the queen became so distressed that she cared about nobody. The king's son bade her privately to tell him the cause of her trouble, but she was very unwilling to do so; finally, however, she concluded to tell him, and said that her health had been so upon the voyage that she had no desire to eat what others did, and that her trouble came principally from seasickness. She asked the king's son to suggest a remedy, but he replied that he could not, and said there was nothing that would be of use to her. He said that on one ship was some salt meat, but it was raw and she could not use it. She replied that she could cook it herself and became at once cheerful again, but she begged the king's son to say nothing about these trifles. It is said that the queen ate a barrel of flesh each day, and that she was the most hideous giantess while she ate, but afterward changed her shape again. This went on for eleven days, but on the twelfth day while she was eating the twelfth barrel of flesh the king's son showed King Mani her employment, and told him how often she had been there during the voyage. The king was astounded when he saw that he had been the companion of such a monster. They now set fire to the powder in the flesh-ship, as may be supposed, and sprang it into the air, and the queen, or rather the giantess, met there with a speedy death. Then King Mani bade the king's son to tell him how this ill fate had come about. He did so and afterward took him to Mjadveig, and she told him plainly of all the deeds and deceits of the queen, which astonished the king much. They now sailed home to the realm of the king's son, and there were celebrated both a joyful banquet and the wedding-feast, which lasted a whole month. At its close King Mani was fitted out with good gifts, and he afterward sailed back to his kingdom and ruled there until old age, and with that he is out of the story. Of the king's son it is to be told that he succeeded to the kingdom after

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his father, and so a year passed away that has nothing to do with the story, except that Mjadveig gave birth to a beautiful boy. After that time she went to the bath with one of her serving-maids; when, however, she arrived there she wanted some soap, so she sent her maid to look for it while she herself waited at the bath. Then a woman came to her and greeted her respectfully, and the queen bade her welcome. The woman asked the queen to exchange garments with her, and Mjadveig did so. Then the woman commanded and laid the spell that she should receive every look of the queen, but Mjadveig should go to her brother, and then instantly turned away from her. Nobody knew of this change, but after this everything went wrongly with the queen as was to be expected. It is said that when the king took Mjadveig from the hut he thought the house so charming that with his knowledge of magic he brought it away entire; since then it had been in the queen's hall, and while everything went well had retained the same nature as before:—

"There fountains sprang,
There cuckoos sang,
And there gamboled the ram in glee."

Now, however, it was changed to

"Neither cuckoos sing,
Nor fountains spring,
And the ram gambols not in glee,
And never is quiet the baby boy
That in the cradle lies,"

and everything seemed to go wrong in the kingdom.

It however so happened one day that the king's treasurer walked near the sea. He there saw that under some crags a glass hall came up out of the sea, and in it was a woman so like queen Mjadveig that it seemed to him he could not tell them apart; about the hall was an iron chain held by a hideous giant who pulled the hall down again. The man was astonished at this sight and stood still by a brook. As he stood there thinking he saw a child drawing water from the brook; he gave the child a ring and it was pleased with the gift; afterward it

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disappeared into a stone near by. Instantly there came out a dwarf and greeted the man and thanked him for his child, and asked him what he would accept of him in return. The man asked him to tell him what that meant that he had just seen under the crags by the sea. The dwarf said that it was queen Mjadveig whom he had seen in the glass hall, that she was concealed by an ogre, and that in her place had come a giantess, the sister of the giant he had seen holding the chain. The dwarf told him further that the giant had promised Mjadveig to allow her to come four times on land under the conditions he had seen, and she should be allowed to go free if somebody were so fortunate during the time as to deliver her out of his clutches; she had however already been three times on land, and it would be the last time when she came up the next day. The man now bade the dwarf to give him the good advice how to deliver the queen out of her captivity. The dwarf fetched him an axe and told him that he should cut the chain in two when the hall came up the next day. The man remained in the stone during the night. The next day he went thither to where the hall was wont to come up, and after a little while it appeared by the cliffs: the man was not slow in cutting the chain and succeeded easily in so doing. Now, however, the giant came up in order to kill him who had cut the chain, but the dwarf came with a little bag and threw its contents into the giant's face; he thus became blind, so that he tumbled down from the rocks and lost his life. They, however, went with Mjadveig to the dwarf in the stone and she remained there; they then went home to the palace and laid a rune-stick upon the queen, as may be supposed, and she changed into a hideous giantess, and they made her tell the story of her life. She then told how she had acted toward Mjadveig and where her brother lived; finally she said King Mani's last queen had been their sister; she had therefore done this, she said, out of revenge toward Queen Mjadveig. The king now became very angry and caused her without delay to be assigned to a disgraceful death. Now the shepherd asked the king what reward he would grant if some one were able to release the queen out of her captivity, and the king replied that he would grant him large gifts of money, an earl's title, and a stewardship. The little man was not long in seeking

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the queen and conducting her to the king, and there was a more joyful meeting than can be described. When the queen was again back in the palace—

> "Then cuckoos sang,
> Then fountains sprang,
> And then gambolled the ram in glee;
> Then was quiet the baby boy
> That in the cradle lay."

From this time on the queen lived in happiness till old age: and here ends the story of Mjadveig the daughter of Mani.

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